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MACK: CHAVEZ UNDERMINES FREE AND DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN VENEZUELA

WASHINGTON – Congressman Connie Mack (FL-14) today criticized Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez for undermining yesterday’s elections by keeping credible opponents out of the race and threatening others with imprisonment and violence.

Mack, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and one of Congress’ most vocal critics of Hugo Chavez, said:

“In yesterday’s historic elections, opposition candidates won several key races, including the mayoral race in Caracas and some governorships. These victories prove that the ideals of freedom and democracy are still alive in Venezuela, and the Venezuelan people, despite Hugo Chavez’s endless assaults on these sacred institutions, yearn to be free.

“Despite these few and important victories, Chavez and his cronies have proven that they will stop at nothing to ensure they win elections by using intimidation, manipulation, and threats. While Chavez claims he firmly believes in democracy, his actions speak louder than words: browbeating his opponents, keeping credible candidates out of the election, and threatening to imprison his opposition.

“Until Venezuelans can vote in free and fair elections, Chavez will continue to rule with an iron fist and do everything in his power to rule indefinitely. The United States and its allies in the region must continue to stand with the Venezuelan people and keep a watchful eye on Hugo Chavez.”

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